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THE NEW YORK TIMES
30 May 1979

PRESIDENT DEFENDS MOBILE MISSILE PLAN

He Says Weapon Allowed in Arms
Pact Could Promote Peace

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, May 29 — President Carter, evidently leaning toward approving development of a new mobile ballistic missile, said today that the weapon would be consistent with Soviet-American arms control measures and that its deployment could contribute to world peace.

At a news conference, the President said he had not yet decided whether to deploy the missile, known as the MX. But officials said his comments seemed to foreshadow a decision to go ahead with the \$30 billion program in the near future.

He denied that the missile would run counter to his goal of working toward the elimination of nuclear weapons and noted that the weapon would be permitted under the terms of the new arms-limitation agreement with the Soviet Union.

The President's remarks came as officials said a consensus was emerging in the Administration on a basing system for the mobile missile, using a system of 20-mile-long concrete trenches in which the missile would be deployed on railroad cars in the American Southwest. The officials said defense and foreign policy aides endorsed the idea at a White House meeting late last week.

Asked whether the deployment of a highly accurate, multiwarhead missile could upset arms talks with the Russians, Mr. Carter said "the most destabilizing thing" would be the "acknowledged inferiority" of the American nuclear deterrent or "the vulnerable deployment of strategic missiles." [Question 11, Page A12.]

Mr. Carter was alluding to a Defense Department estimate that by the early

1980's the Soviet Union would have the ability, in theory, to destroy a large part of the United States' 1,054 land-based missiles. The Pentagon is proposing the deployment of 200 mobile missiles to frustrate any "first strike" attack.

Discussing a Soviet military buildup in recent years, Mr. Carter said: "We must maintain an adequate level of armaments. When we do deploy new types of missiles to stay current and to keep equivalency with the Soviet Union, that, in my opinion, contributes to peace."

The mobile missile has been criticized by Senate liberals, such as George McGovern, Democrat of South Dakota, as being unnecessary and jeopardizing chances for future arms agreements. But Senator Sam Nunn, Democrat of Georgia, and others have indicated that they would not support the arms treaty without new defense commitments by the President.

The concept of trench-based mobile missiles was first proposed by the Air Force more than two years ago, but subsequently Pentagon scientists judged it to be impractical. Defense officials now say that the trench basing system will work, but some specialists continue to express doubts.

Other options considered at the White House meeting called for deploying the missile among thousands of empty, underground silos or scrapping the mobile missile altogether in favor of a new submarine-launched missile.

The officials said that the submarine system was supported by the President's science adviser, Dr. Frank Press, and by Adm. Stansfield Turner, the Director of Central Intelligence. However, at the urging of Zbigniew Brzezinski, Mr. Carter's national security adviser, participants are said to have agreed that scrapping the mobile missile would hurt the chances of obtaining Senate ratification of the arms treaty.

There was also skepticism regarding the so-called "shell-game" plan, in which the mobile missiles would be moved

about at random among empty silos. While this system was described as the least expensive, it was thought to pose almost insurmountable monitoring problems, officials said.

Last week's White House meeting was described by officials as the last formal session on the mobile missile issue. Secretary of Defense Harold Brown is now expected to offer his final recommendation to the President, who would announce his decision before he meets with Leonid I. Brezhnev, the Soviet leader, in Vienna next month.